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What Is An Antique?

Abstract

Antiques are undoubtedly objects worthy of aesthetic appreciation, but do they have a distinctive aesthetic value in virtue of being antiques? In this paper we give an account of what it is to be an antique that gives the thesis that they do have a distinctive aesthetic value a chance of being true, and suggests what that distinctive value consists in. After introducing our topic in section I, in section II we develop and defend the Adjectival Thesis: the thesis that the concept of being an antique is an adjectival concept. This provides us with the means to formulate our definition, which we do in section III. In section IV we further explicate and defend our definition. In section V we conclude by briefly saying where we think our definition could be improved, by making a few comments about the aesthetics of antiques, and by stating an interesting consequence of our definition: that it is not analytic that antiques are old.

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What Is An Antique?

I. Introduction

Antiques are undoubtedly objects worthy of aesthetic appreciation, but do they have a distinctive aesthetic value in virtue of being antiques? Our aim in this paper is not to answer this question directly, but rather to supply some necessary groundwork required for answering it. We offer an analysis of what it is to be an antique that gives the thesis that they do have a distinctive aesthetic value a chance of being true, and suggests what that distinctive value consists in.

Given that typical antiques are usually entirely non-representational and were originally made to serve a specific non-aesthetic function (e.g. antique chairs were made to be sat on), it is plausible that the aesthetic value of a typical antique lies partly in how well its formal properties (namely, those aesthetically relevant properties that are, in some sense, immediately graspable in experience) are balanced with those properties that allow it to fulfil its intended function. But although any definition of an antique must allow that its formal properties are aesthetically important, this cannot be the whole story, for this would not distinguish antiques from newly made items.

Danto's famous argument against formalism about the aesthetic value of art (see, e.g. Danto 1981, 94–95; Danto 1986, 30–31) has an analogue in the case of antiques. Consider a genuine antique chair (say, a Hepplewhite) and a newly made atom-for-atom duplicate produced by a high-tech copying device. Just as an

original piece of art work possesses significantly more value than any copy, it seems the genuine Hepplewhite possesses significantly more value than its copy too.[i] This clearly generalises and so, it seems, a major part of an antique object's aesthetic value derives from its possession of certain extrinsic non-formal properties.[ii] But which properties are relevant here? Anti-formalists about the value of art most often appeal to certain extrinsic historical properties, such as the context in which the art object was made, its relation to the art world, and its method of production. Properties like these are no doubt important in the case of antiques too, but this seems to miss something important. If antiques have a distinctive aesthetic value, it seems it is one that they *gain* over time. Although they have the extrinsic properties of being made in a particular context and using a particular method of production from the moment they come into existence, it is only later that they gain their full aesthetic standing by becoming antiques. In a way that it is not so in the case of art-objects *having a certain age* itself seems, at least *prima facie*, to be an aesthetically important property in the case of antiques. Correspondingly, it seems that the aesthetic appreciation of an antique is distinctive in that it involves, in some sense, an appreciation of this very property.[iii]

Given the importance that antiques seem to have in aesthetics, it is surprising that they have received very little attention in the philosophical literature. So far as we have been able to ascertain, there is only a single journal article, and a single book, on the Philosophy of Antiques. Both are by Leon Rosenstein (Rosenstein 1987, 2009), the latter is a fleshed-out version of the former, and neither have received much in the way of critical attention. This paper is, in part, an attempt to remedy this situation. As mentioned, however, our

primary purpose is not to directly answer questions about the aesthetic value of antiques, but rather to supply some necessary groundwork required for answering them. Specifically, we give a definition that can serve as a basis upon which to answer questions about their aesthetic value. Nonetheless, in giving our definition, we also have our eye on the aesthetic value of antiques. Firstly, the definition that we will give allows that an antique's formal properties are aesthetically important. Secondly, and more importantly, the definition that we will give suggests that *having a certain age* cannot, in fact, be the property that grounds an antique's distinctive aesthetic value. Rather, it must be the property of *being rooted in the past* that does so (what this means will be explained more fully in due course).

In section II we develop and defend the Adjectival Thesis. This is the thesis that the concept of being an antique is an adjectival concept. This provides us with the means to formulate our definition, which we do in section III. In section IV we further explicate and defend our definition. In section V we conclude by briefly saying where we think our definition could be improved, by making a few comments about the aesthetics of antiques, and by stating an interesting consequence of our definition: that it is not analytic that antiques are old.

II. The Adjectival Thesis

What kind of concept is the concept of being an antique? Is it a *sortal* concept? That is, does the concept of being an antique supply one with synchronic and diachronic identity-conditions?[iv] In fact, we think it is not. Instead we defend the thesis that the concept of being an antique is, like the concept of being red, an adjectival

concept. According to this thesis, to describe an object as being an antique is not to say that it *is* an object of some special kind K. Rather, it is to say *of* an object of some kind K that it possesses some *further* property. If something is red, it must be a red thing *of some kind K* (where 'K' stands for a term that expresses some genuine sortal concept, e.g. 'table', 'chair', 'statue', etc.). Similarly, if the Adjectival Thesis is true then, if something is an antique, it must be an antique thing *of some kind K*. If this thesis is true then the concept of being an antique does not by itself supply either synchronic or diachronic identity-conditions. Rather, these are supplied in particular cases by an associated sortal concept. In other words, all antiques are antiques of a particular kind K, and each inherits its identity conditions from the kind K of antique thing it is. So, for example, antique tables have the identity-conditions associated with tables, whilst antique clocks have the identity-conditions associated with clocks. So, as tables and clocks have distinct (synchronic and diachronic) identity-conditions, antique tables have different identity-conditions from antique clocks. There simply is nothing general (that is, non-disjunctive) that can be said about the identity-conditions of antiques.

We think that the Adjectival Thesis should be one's default position, and we suppose it will strike many as obviously true. But what can be said in its defence? It fits well with how we talk about antiques. We say that tables and chairs and vases and figurines (and so on) *become* antiques. This suggests we think of such items as gaining the property of being an antique as they become old. But if the concept is a sortal concept this cannot be maintained. Instead one has to hold that, when we say (for example) that a table becomes an antique at some time t, what we really mean is that a distinct object that materially coincides with the

table has come into existence at t, and that this new object is an antique.[v] Let us spell this out in a little more detail.

We cannot think of any plausible examples in which an antique object exists but fails to materially coincide with an object of some uncontroversial sortal kind K (that is, *all* antiques coincide with either *tables*, or *chairs*, or *clocks*, or *figurines*, and so on). So we assert that: for all times t, and all antiques x, if x exists at t, then some object y of a (non-antique) sortal kind K exists at t and x materially coincides with y at t. According to the Adjectival Thesis antiques are not objects of their own kind, and they inherit their identity-conditions from the Ks they materially coincide with. This entails that necessarily, every antique object x is identical with (that is, is one and the same thing as) the object y of kind K that it coincides with at t. (So it entails that the antique object x is also of kind K.) But if one denies the Adjectival Thesis one will maintain that antiques are objects of their own kind, so associated with distinct identity-conditions from the Ks they coincide with, and so could come into existence at different times from the Ks they coincide with. But the only plausible time at which an antique could be said to come into existence, on this view, is when we would ordinarily say that a K has 'become' an antique – that is, at some time after the K has come into existence. So, if one rejects the Adjectival Thesis, Ks can and do exist before the antiques that materially coincide with them exist. And so antiques and the Ks they materially coincide with must be non-identical.

It is implausible that antiques are non-identical with the Ks they coincide with. As already mentioned, it fails to fit our talk of Ks *becoming* antiques. But it also fails to fit our ordinary beliefs. No-one believes when they are buying an antique chair, for example, that they are buying both an antique *and* a chair. And

more substantially still, our linguistic behaviour belies the fact that we are heavily inclined to think of antiques as being identical with the Ks they coincide with. Suppose there is a Georgian table in front of us, and suppose we ask "When did *this antique* come into existence?" Demonstratives take wide scope, so we here ask *de re* of the object in front of us (that is an antique) when *it* came into existence.[vi] How would you respond? We think you would be most inclined to respond by giving the date on which the table was made (that is, somewhere between 1714 and 1837). But at that time the table was not an antique, and so if one denies the Adjectival Thesis, no antique existed. So referring using the demonstrative 'this antique' in situations like this, one denotes an object that is a table and not some non-identical shorter-lived materially coincident object that is an antique.

Given its plausibility, why would anyone wish to deny the Adjectival Thesis? Because there are cases that seem to be inconsistent with it. We said we cannot think of any plausible examples in which an antique object fails to coincide with an object of some uncontroversial sortal kind K. But we can think of many cases in which, plausibly, one and the same antique coincides with an object of kind K at one time, and with a distinct object of kind K' at another. From the outside, the antique trade may seem reputable and an antique classed as such may be assumed to be genuine. Like the art market, however, the market for antiques is full of spurious pieces, from pieces misrepresented in terms of their age to complete fakes, from elaborations added to lesser pieces to make them more valuable to conversion of existing pieces in terms of size and shape. (Hayward, 1970; Cescinsky, 1967; Symonds, 1927) The antique market is awash with "antiques" that have been converted from one piece of furniture into another. An example comes from a book by the cabinet-maker, W Crawley (Crawley 1971),

who outlines ways of ascertaining whether a piece of antique furniture is genuine. Working as an apprentice, Crawley reports that in 1939, he had a fair amount of satin wood, mostly from a Victorian wardrobe. He spent several months working in his spare time, making a "very nice" semi-circular commode, a copy of a popular eighteenth-century design. Crawley admits that the piece had faults. For instance, the door lock was from the Victorian wardrobe rather than sourced from an eighteenth-century original. On the second time of trying, Crawley reports that he managed to sell his new piece at a "knocked-down" price of £8.75. Throughout his career, Crawley occasionally saw his piece being sold as a genuine antique by different dealers in London's West End, at a price much higher than the original price.

Now, consider a case of a commode that was converted in, say, 2010, from a Victorian wardobe by a modern-day cabinet maker in the same way that Crawley made the conversion in 1939. In this case there was certainly an antique present prior to the 2010 conversion that coincided with the original Victorian wardrobe. And had that wardrobe not been converted into a commode, there would certainly be an antique present now that materially coincides with it too. But is there an antique present now, given that the wardrobe *was* converted into a commode?

The concept of being a wardrobe is a sortal concept (let us label it 'W'). So in the Victorian era an object o1 of kind W came into existence. And in 2010 o1 had some parts removed and was modified in various ways, and what resulted was undeniably a commode. The concept of being a commode is also a sortal concept (let us label it 'C'). So in 2010 an object o2 of kind C came into existence. So, the situation is this:

1. In the Victorian era an object o1 of kind W came into existence.

o1 underwent changes in 2010 which resulted in:

2. In 2010 an object o2 of kind C came into existence.

If we further suppose, as everyone does, that:

3. No object of a kind K can survive any change (or set of changes) that results in it becoming an object of a distinct kind K'.

Then we must conclude that the original wardrobe o1 does not survive. It goes out of existence in 2010 due to changes made to it, and as a result a new object o2, a commode, comes into existence. So, we must conclude:

C. o1 (the wardrobe) is non-identical with o2 (the commode).

If we maintain the Adjectival Thesis we maintain that the antique that materially coincides with o1 prior to 2010 just is that wardrobe. That is, it is identical with o1. So when the wardrobe goes out of existence in 2010, so does the antique. So, if we maintain the Adjectival Thesis it is incorrect to describe o2 as a *Victorian* commode, and incorrect to describe it as an *antique*. However, if one denies the Adjectival Thesis one can maintain that the description is correct. One can maintain that antiques are kinds of things that come into existence when another object (in this case a wardrobe) reaches a certain age, and that they are kinds of things that can survive (unlike wardrobes) radical material changes. So in this case, for example, one would maintain that there is a further thing o3 of a distinct kind (that is, of the *kind* antique) that coincides with o1 before 2010 and coincides with o2 afterwards.

We have no knock-down argument against anyone who denies the Adjectival Thesis for the above reason. But we think that saving a particular description of cases such as the one above is a poor reason to reject the Adjectival Thesis given the support the thesis gains elsewhere (namely, from our linguistic

usage and our ordinary beliefs). We think the correct conclusion to draw about cases like the one above is that auction houses sometimes mis-describe items of furniture, such as our commode, as being antiques, when, strictly speaking, they are not.

So we take the Adjectival Thesis to be true. This means that in specifying what an antique is we are not looking to give the identity-conditions for antiques (for there are none to give). Rather, we are looking to specify what conditions an object of a kind K must meet if it is to be counted as an antique. Now, we take it as being obvious that not any kind of thing K can be an antique. Natural kinds, for example, cannot be antiques. No matter how long a parrot lives, for example, it will never become an antique. So what kinds of things can become antiques? In fact, we're not sure how to answer this question precisely, but for our purposes we can make do with the following rough-and-ready answer: only man-made items – *artefactual kinds* – can become antiques; tables, chairs, vases, brooches, figurines, etc. So, in giving an account of what an antique is we are looking to fill out the right-hand side of the following schema:

ANT: An object x of an artefactual kind K is an antique K iff…

III. Filling Out the ANT-Schema

In this section we argue that we should fill out the right-hand side of the ANT-schema with just two conditions that relate to technical excellence and age.[vii]

Technical excellence: Leon Rosenstein suggests that technical perfection is a necessary condition for being an antique. But what is technical perfection?

> Technical perfection involves many elements. On the one hand, it concerns the question of how (by what processes) the material medium has been formed (designed) and whether or not the choice of materials in a given instance and the manner of conforming them to the design best embody the idea of the work. We also ask, conversely, does the idea best bring out the characteristics of the material? This aspect often is referred to as "truth to materials," which sometimes means allowing the materials the upper hand, giving them leeway to do what they most naturally tend to do (as when wood is left to show its grain and to dictate the shape and proportions of a table surface), but sometimes can mean allowing the idea and design to have the upper hand, forcing the materials to do that which by their nature they are disinclined to do (as when iron and glass are used in fashions contrary to their nature – in Art Nouveau constructions, for example)… Technical perfection is the cause of the experience that can only be captured by imaging that the work in presenting itself to us is saying, "Voila!"

We agree (almost) entirely. However, it is unclear whether Rosenstein believes, as the term 'perfection' implies, that those objects that exemplify technical perfection could not have been improved upon. At any rate, we do not endorse this view. There are many clear examples of antiques that are not technically *perfect*. So we relax the requirement by allowing that objects exemplifying (mere!) technical excellence, rather than technical perfection, can be antiques. And we wish to make one minor (and obvious) addition: technical excellence is also relative to kinds. (Technical excellence in tables is one thing, technical excellence in cameo brooches another.) But, we agree that this condition is indeed a necessary condition. That is, only well-designed Ks that are well-made from good materials can be antique Ks. To this we add that being well-designed and well-made from good materials relates to how well a K's formal properties are balanced with those properties that allow it to fulfil its intended function as a K, and thus no doubt plays a large role in the aesthetic value than an antique K has. It is probably not possible to precisely capture the distinction, even for a particular kind K, between those things that exemplify technical excellence and those that don't (there is

undoubtedly a vague boundary between the two). But we hope the reader recognises that the distinction exists and is able to recognise clear examples from both categories. (A Chippendale desk is a clear example of a desk that exemplifies technical excellence, whereas a modern, mass produced desk is a clear example of a desk that does not.)

Age: The definition of an antique that is used in (most) legal contexts states that in order to be an antique an object must be over one-hundred years old. But this is an arbitrary stipulation originally made for pragmatic reasons to do with taxation.[viii] In the trade and amongst connoisseurs this crude condition is never adhered to, and so it does not track any real "joint" in the concept of being an antique. Indeed there are clear examples of objects universally considered (in the trade) to be antiques that are far fewer than one-hundred years old. Rosenstein gives the example of Art Deco bracelets made by Cartier in the 1920s. To this we add that certain items of Edwardian furniture made between 1900 and 1910 have been considered antiques now for many years. So how are we to understand the age criterion? Rosenstein goes on to say:

> Age is better understood as "agedness". This historical characteristic means that it clearly is made in a style that is no longer current and that it clearly shows material signs of aging… but especially that it speaks for its age. That is, it is sufficiently exemplary of its past era to evoke for us an image of that world now gone. (Rosenstein, 2009, p175)

There is some truth in this; it is a necessary condition of being an antique that an object was made in a style that is exemplary of the era in which the object was made. (Note also that, in agreement with Rosenstein, we consider an object's method of production to be part of its style – but often, for clarity, we will speak of this as a separate condition.) But the suggestion that the style in which it was made

must no longer be current should be rejected. The reason is simple. Style revivals are common-place (including revivals of methods of production), and we should not rule out an object as being an antique on the basis that the style in which it was made has now become fashionable again. So, the condition should be stated in the following way: an object is an antique only if it was made in a style (and using a method of production) that is exemplary of the era in which the object was made, and that has *subsequently become obsolete*.[ix]

More substantially, that an antique must show material signs of age should be rejected. Certainly showing signs of age can sometimes add value to an antique (e.g. a nice patina on an oak desk), and that an object shows material signs of age can give us evidence that the object really was made in a past era. But it can hardly be considered a necessary condition of *being* an antique that it shows its age. It is possible to artificially bring the ageing process of an artefact virtually to a halt by, for example, placing it in a vacuum. But any object that counts as being an antique would still count as being an antique even had it been placed in a vacuum on the day it was made and had remained there untouched ever since. So showing material signs of age cannot be a necessary condition of being an antique.

The suggestion that we include as a necessary condition that an antique has the capacity to evoke in us an image of the world now past should also be rejected. Rosenstein makes heavy weather of this condition, explaining it more fully under the heading of *subject*. According to Rosenstein, (i.) the past world that an antique evokes, and (ii.) the way in which it was constructed from its constituent materials, are the "subjects" of an antique.[x] What Rosenstein seems to have in mind is that antiques enable us to access information about the past time at which they were made, and about how they were constructed, in some special kind of

way. If we allow that, in order to access this information in this way, pre-existing knowledge of the past and special training (perhaps special *aesthetic* training) may be required, this is perhaps plausible. Then Rosenstein's view is that at least some antiques have certain properties that allow someone specially attuned to them to appreciate how they were made and how they were used in the past. But then we may as well state this condition directly in terms of the properties that specially trained individuals are attuned to, rather than in terms of those specially attuned individuals themselves.

What, then, are these properties? Rosenstein's answer is: an object's style, the perceptible signs of its method of production, and its signs of material ageing. But we have already said that it is a necessary condition of being an antique that an object is made in a style (which includes its method of production) that is exemplary of the era in which the object was made. And we have already ruled out showing signs of material ageing as being a further necessary condition. If we further add that all aspects of an object's style except its method of production are invariably perceptible, we now see that all this condition adds is that in certain circumstances an antique's method of production must be perceptible. But this cannot plausibly be considered a necessary condition for *being* an antique under any circumstances. What is important is not whether we can *tell* if an object was made using a method of production that is exemplary of the era in which it was made. All that is important is that it *was* made using such a method.[xi]

That an object is made in a (subsequently obsolete) style that is exemplary of the era in which the object was made is, then, a necessary condition of being an antique, on our view. But what constitutes being made in a particular style? And when does a style become obsolete? These are difficult questions, and we do not

attempt to give precise answers here. But we do not need to give precise answers in order to use the notions of an antique's style and its method of production. It is enough that we can recognise that styles and methods of production exist, are rooted in certain times, do change over the years, and do become obsolete. For example, the style and methods of production for making furniture used by the Elizabethans is different from the style and methods of production used by those in the time of George II, which is different from those used by the Edwardians, which is different from those used today. And the styles and methods used by the Elizabethans were obsolete by the time of George II, whose styles and methods were obsolete by the time of the Edwardians, whose styles and methods are now obsolete.

A useful notion in understanding our point here is that of 'authenticity'. We can recognise that only those cabinet-makers who learned their trade in a particular era, embedded within the social practices, norms, and working conditions of that era, can produce authentic furniture in the style of that era. Someone might attempt to produce furniture today in the same style and using the same methods of production as, say, the Elizabethans. But they would not have learnt those methods in the same way. In particular, they would not have been embedded within the social practices, norms, and working conditions of the Elizabethan era. As such, our modern-day cabinet-maker would be producing furniture by *copying* the methods and styles of the Elizabethans. The resultant furniture, no matter how similar it might be to authentic Elizabethan furniture, would not be authentic Elizabethan furniture for this reason. Part of what it means, then, to say that a style and method of production for making Ks is exemplary of the era in which the Ks were made, is that the style and method of

production are *rooted in that era*, where this is understood to mean that those making the Ks learned how to do so in an authentic manner. We say also that Ks made in such a way are themselves rooted in that past era.[xii]

Our view is that this notion, that styles and methods of production (and so the artefacts produced using them) are rooted in the past, is the main notion underlying the concept of an antique. In order to be an antique an artefact must be rooted in the past. And if an artefact is of sufficient quality (that is, if it exemplifies technical excellence), then it is an antique if it is rooted in the past. So these two conditions capture what it is for an object of an artefactual kind K to be an antique K.

Our view explains why it takes time for objects to become antiques. Styles and methods of production evolve slowly, and so it takes time for any particular style and method of production to become obsolete. Moreover, it explains the common idea that antiques themselves fall into distinct categories. Antique English furniture is usually classified (albeit crudely) in terms of the monarchs on the throne at the time the furniture was made. During the 18th Century, for example, we have William III furniture (1694-1702), Queen Anne furniture (1702-1714), early Georgian furniture (1714-1760), and late Georgian furniture (1760-1811). What these classifications recognise, however crudely, is that the styles and methods of production used to make furniture changed significantly from one period to the next in England, and so the furniture produced in each period warrants being considered as falling into a distinct antique category.

Of course, that the styles and methods of production of *furniture* in England changed significantly across these periods does not mean that the styles and methods of production of *other artefactual kinds* changed significantly during the

same period. And indeed, for some kinds of thing they did not change significantly. Porcelain, for example, was not made at all in England until after 1747. Shortly after this time a number of competing manufacturers appeared across the country, each using distinct styles and methods of production which remained, in each case, more-or-less unchanged for the following fifty years or so. But this is also recognised in the standard classificatory scheme. English porcelain is not classified in terms of the Monarchical system, but simply as 18th Century English porcelain. Given our account, this is not surprising. Kinds are often associated with their own particular styles and methods of production, and we should not expect the styles and methods of production of every kind of thing to change in line with every other kind of thing.

This brings us to another important point that we have so far neglected – that of location. Styles and methods of production are not only rooted in times, but also in places. Furniture across England was produced in a more-or-less uniform manner at any given time in the 18th Century, so we generally have no need to categorise antique English furniture in any more place-specific manner, and can make do with the Monarchical categorisation. But with English porcelain matters are quite different. Despite the fact that the styles and methods of production used by each 18th Century porcelain manufacturer did not change significantly during this period, they differed significantly across manufacturers. And this too is reflected in the standard classificatory scheme. Thus we have 18th Century Worcester porcelain, Derby porcelain, Chelsea porcelain, Bow porcelain, Spode porcelain, and so on. So, we ought to include reference to location in our definition too.

So, to sum up, we have argued that the following definition correctly captures the necessary and sufficient conditions for being an antique:

ANT*: An object x of an artefactual kind K is an antique K iff x exemplifies technical excellence (for a K) and was made in a style and using a method of production (for making Ks) that subsequently became obsolete, but is exemplary of (and so rooted in) the era and place in which the K was made.

One might argue that this definition is too broad, and includes certain objects as being antiques that are not antiques. Consider, for example, well-made VCR players. Such items were first produced in the mid-1970s and became obsolete by the mid-2000s. One might object that such items would not generally be considered antiques, but claim that our definition entails that they are, and so argue that our definition is inadequate.[xiii]

In response to objections of this kind, there are a number of things to be said. Firstly, if it is true that our definition does entail that items such as well-made VCR players are antiques, this is not necessarily a problem for it. As Frank Jackson has forcefully argued, conceptual analysis has a prescriptive element, and upon analysis concepts are often seen to have applications that extend beyond their ordinary applications. (See Jackson 1998: 31-32, Jackson 2001: 618. See also Gibbard 1990: 32 for a similar point.) But secondly, it is far from clear that our definition does entail that well-made VCR players are antiques. It is far from clear that VCR players are the right *kinds* of objects to be antiques. Here we return to the question raised at the end of section II, namely: Which kinds can be antiques? There we said that only artefactual kinds can be antiques, but signalled that this

was only a rough-and-ready answer, and so implied that we do not think that all artefactual kinds are antique-candidate kinds. We also said that we have no more precise answer to give about which artefactual kinds are antique-candidate kinds. On this score we hope that others will be able to improve upon our account, and it may turn out that VCR players are ruled out when such improvements are made. Moreover, it may be that our definition already rules out well-made VCRs as being antiques (at least at the current time). Although VCRs are themselves now obsolete, it is not clear that the styles and methods of production for making them are obsolete. We are not experts in this area, but it seems plausible that the style in which VCR players were made, and methods of production used in producing them, are still used in making their successors, e.g. DVD players and Blu-ray players. At any rate, we do not here endorse any particular response to this objection, but merely note that there are a number of plausible responses that can be given.

IV. Other conditions?

Are there any other conditions that can make a difference to whether a K is an antique K or not? Rosenstein suggests six: 1. Provenance; 2. Condition; 3. Completeness; 4. Rarity; 5. Size; and 6. Context. Here we briefly comment on, and reject, these conditions:

1. *Provenance*. An antique's provenance, strictly speaking, is simply its causal history understood in a wide sense to include the time and place it was made, who made it, and what has happened to it since it was made (who has owned it, where it has been, etc.). An antique's causal history is itself an important factor in what

makes it an antique. But only those aspects of its causal history that relate to its style and method of production are important, and this much is already captured by the definition we have given.

2. *Condition*. Rosenstein claims that in certain circumstances an object must be in good condition in order to be classed as an antique, but that how good a condition it must be in depends on what kind of object it is, how old it is, and what material it is made from. (Rosenstein 2009: 165) Stated in ANT-schema form, Rosenstein's suggestion can be spelled out as follows:

- Some object x of an artefactual kind K is an antique K only if x is in good condition for a K of its age.

The suggestion is false. Of course, it is often the case that a K in good condition (for a K of its age) is more *valuable* than a K in bad condition (for a K of its age), but this has nothing to do with whether any particular K is an antique K or not. Distinct antiques can be of different kinds and different kinds have different identity-conditions. Some have identity-conditions that are quite forgiving. Buildings are relatively sturdy – they can withstand fairly heavy alterations without ceasing to exist. Other kinds have less forgiving identity-conditions. Cameos are more fragile – they are destroyed more easily. And sometimes there are changes that one kind of thing can survive but another cannot. Statues can plausibly survive having their heads cut off (just about), whilst portrait paintings cannot. These are facts about the identity-conditions of kinds of things that can be antiques, but this has nothing to do with whether an object *is* an antique or not. Of course, if an antique object of

kind K undergoes changes that destroy it, then, as the antique *is* the object of kind K, the antique itself also ceases to exist.

3. *Completeness*:

Rosenstein claims an object can fail to be an antique in some circumstances in virtue of being incomplete – that is, in virtue of missing parts. But this claim is only true if the object in question also fails to be a K in virtue of having missing parts. That is, the following is true:

- An object x can fail to be an antique K in virtue of having missing parts only if x fails to be a K in virtue of having missing parts.

But this condition is already captured by the definition we have given, and so is not an additional condition at all.

4. *Rarity*. Rosenstein claims that whether an artefact is an antique can depend on how many artefacts of its type exist. Again, although whether an artefact is rare can affect its value, this has nothing to do with whether it is an antique or not. Consider the one-of-a-kind antique 18th Century Qing vase that recently sold at Bainbridge's for £53 million. Suppose it were discovered that this vase was, in fact, just one of a job lot, and that a cache of five-hundred (or more) qualitatively identical vases were discovered. This would, of course, radically affect the value of the vase, but it would not make it a non-antique. The same consideration applies to any other example of an antique that is putatively only an antique because it is rare.

5. *Size*. Rosenstein argues that objects can fail to be antiques due to their size. He claims, for example, that nails are too small to be antiques, and cities too big (Rosenstein 2009: 173). We agree that nails and cities cannot be antiques. But this has nothing to do with their size. Miniatures and dolls-house furniture are often as small as nails, but these can certainly be antiques. And whilst there are obvious practical reasons why huge city-sized ceramic pots cannot be built, if one were constructed we see no reason why it too should be ruled out from being an antique purely in virtue of its size. So why do nails and cities not count as antiques? Once more, we here restate that our answer to the question of what kinds of things can be antiques was only a rough-and-ready answer, and that we do not think that all artefactual kinds are antique-candidate kinds. But just because we do not offer a more refined account does not mean that we cannot recognise that certain artefactual kinds are not antique-candidate kinds, and here we *can* recognise that nails and cities are not antique-candidate kinds, and so that their not being antiques has nothing to do with their size.[xiv]

6. *Context*. The extension of the term 'antique' is fully determined, in any context, by the definition we have given. That is, an object x falls into its extension at a given context iff at that context, x is an artefactual K that exemplifies technical excellence and was made in a style and using a method of production that subsequently became obsolete, but is exemplary of the era and place in which the K was made. The occurrence of 'was' means that the term's extension does depend upon the time of the context (that is, *when* it is used), but there are no further indexical terms, so it does not depend upon any further features of the context (e.g. where it is used, or who uses it). So the term 'antique', used today, anywhere, and by

anyone, has the same extension. But, used today the term's extension contains many more things than it would have contained were it used one-hundred years ago. Indeed, the term's extension grows continually as time goes by. It does so simply because more and more styles and methods of production become obsolete as time goes by, and so there are more and more objects of artefactual kinds that were made using past styles and methods of production as time goes by. What our account does not allow is for something to be in the extension of the term 'antique' as used one day, but not as used the next. So our view entails a form of contextualism about the term 'antique'. But this is as it should be. And there is certainly no need to include context as a separate condition as Rosenstein proposes. Our definition captures everything that should be said about context as it stands.

V. Conclusion

We conclude, then, that what it is to be an antique is captured by the definition we have given. There are places where our account could be improved. In particular, it could be improved by giving a more precise account of which kinds are antique-candidate kinds. Our account could also be improved by exploring in more detail what it is for a style and method of production to be rooted in its time, and what it is for them to become obsolete. Here (as indicated in note xiv), it may be fruitful to consider parallels between our account and the various Historical accounts of art works that are present in the literature. And there is also the issue of the applicability of our account to antique art-objects mentioned briefly above (see note xii). Despite these admissions, we believe that our account is substantially correct so that any improvement will build upon our account rather than reject

any aspect of it. At the very least, the onus is on anyone who disagrees with our account to argue for an alternative.

Although we have not directly focussed on questions about the aesthetic value of antiques, our definition, if correct, is highly suggestive. In the introduction we suggested that a large part of an antiques aesthetic value derives from its formal properties (that is, on how well they are balanced with those properties that allow it to fulfil its intended function), and our definition allows for this. But we also said that if antiques have a distinctive aesthetic value then they must derive from certain extrinsic non-formal properties. In particular, we suggested that the property of *having a certain age* is important in this respect. However, in light of what we have said, it is plausible that this is not quite right. Our definition suggests that it is *being rooted in the past* that is of fundamental importance in the case of antiques, rather than *having a certain age* itself. We emphasise that we have not shown here that this property *does* serve to ground the distinctive aesthetic value of antiques. Perhaps there are good reasons for thinking that it *cannot* do so. But if there are, then either our definition is incorrect, or antiques have no distinctive aesthetic value at all. The reason is that if our definition is correct, then no other property can be in the running. Although antiques may gain additional aesthetic value in virtue of *looking old*, or *being rare*, as these properties are not constitutive of being an antique (and do not follow even as a matter of fact from what it is to be an antique), they cannot ground the value that an antique has in virtue of it being an antique.

To finish we briefly mention one interesting consequence of our view. Off-hand one might think that it is analytic that antiques are old. But if our account is correct, then strictly speaking, that all antiques are old is a contingent fact, and so

not analytic. The contingent fact obtains because in the actual world styles and methods of production take a long time to evolve and become obsolete. But if we lived in a world in which styles and methods of production radically altered from day to day, then things made one day would count as being antiques the next. Such a world is hard to imagine and would certainly be very unlike the actual world, but that styles and methods of production take a long time to become obsolete can scarcely be thought to be a logical or conceptual truth. So it is not analytic that antiques are old. Nevertheless, given that styles and methods of production *do* take a long time to become obsolete, all actual antiques *are* old.[xv]

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[i] Walton's equally famous argument against formalism about the value of art (Walton 1970) also has an analogue. Walton argues that the value that an art-object has depends upon under which category of art one views it as falling under (e.g. *being a painting* or *being a collage*). It is likewise plausible that a particular antique object only has the value that it does if viewed under the category of *being an antique*. *Being an antique* does not, however, seem to be a sub-category of *being an artwork*, but seems instead to be a disjoint category.

[ii] For details on how to distinguish formal from non-formal properties see Zangwill (2001: 56).

[iii] Perhaps, however, art-objects too gain an additional value by becoming *antique* art-objects, and that one can gain additional aesthetic appreciation of them by considering them as such. This raises the question: what does it take for an art-object to become an antique art-object? Although we will give a criterion for what it is for an object to be an antique, in this paper we exclude art-objects, for they seem to constitute a special case (see note x for more on this). But even if our criterion does not apply to art-objects, the question of whether art-objects gain an additional value as they age is an important one that considering the case of antiques is likely to shed light upon. This is another reason why those interested in aesthetics should be interested in antiques.

[iv] For an overview of the literature on this and related topics see Noonan and Curtis (2014).

[v] Objects x and y materially coincide at t iff x and y share all parts at t. For more on the puzzles of material coincidence see the articles in Rea (1997).

[vi] That demonstratives take wide scope is uncontroversial, and follows from Kaplan's widely held account of demonstratives. See, e.g. Kaplan (1989).

[vii] In what follows we draw upon the work of Leon Rosenstein. However, there is substantial disagreement between our approach and Rosenstein's. Rosenstein denies that it is possible to give necessary and sufficient conditions for being an antique. He picks out nine conditions: 1. Technical perfection; 2. Age; 3. Subject; 4. Provenance; 5. Condition; 6. Completeness; 7. Rarity; 8. Size; and 9. Context. He argues that despite being 'more-or-less' present in individual antiques, all antiques meet at least a cluster of them. (Rosenstein 2009: 10) His view thus resembles anti-definitional cluster conceptions of art works, such as that defended by Gaut (2000, 2005). Rosenstein suggests that the first two conditions are general necessary conditions for being an antique, but denies that the others are. However, he also thinks that each condition is such that whether a particular object is an antique or not can depend on whether it meets that condition. That is, he thinks that each condition is such that whether it is met can, at least in some circumstances, make the difference between a K being an antique K and it being a non-antique K. We will argue that the first two conditions alone, once properly understood, constitute perfectly general necessary and sufficient conditions for being an antique, and so reject the view that the other conditions can make a difference, even in particular cases, to whether a K is an antique K.

[viii] The hundred year rule appears to have been first introduced in the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 in the United States, introduced to raise tariffs on imported goods. They wished to exclude antiques, and introduced the one-hundred year rule stipulatively simply because mass production did not begin in the United States until after 1830.

[ix] Of course, to say that a style and method of production has become obsolete is not to say that no-one now makes objects in that style or using that method of production. It simply means that anyone who does so is doing so anachronistically – out of line with the general styles and methods now used.

[x] He also considers some art-objects to be antiques, and thinks that they have a representative subject, namely, the same representational subject as the art-object itself. In this paper we exclude antique art-objects from consideration, as they seem to constitute a special case. In particular, the styles and methods of production used for creating art-objects are often specific to a particular individual, and even specific to a particular individual at a particular time. To give just one example, Kittiwat Unarrom has recently

made art-objects out of bread using a technique that no-one before has used. It is thus entirely unclear whether it is right to say that the style and method of production he used is rooted in the current era. And if it is right, then what would we say about Unarrom's pieces were he to stop making art-objects using these techniques tomorrow? Would the method thereby become obsolete, making his pieces antiques? It would be interesting to pursue this and other related matters, but we do not do so here.

[xi] There is an important point here regarding the aesthetic value that antiques have. It is plausible that our being able to gain special access to facts about the past time at which an antique was made, and about how it was constructed, is partly constitutive of appreciating an antique aesthetically, and so what gives any antique its distinctive aesthetic value. But if our account is correct, it is in principle possible for there to be antiques such that we cannot gain such access. So, does this show that antiques cannot be said to possess a distinctive aesthetic value in virtue of our being able to gain access to such facts? It does not, for in practice it *is* always possible to gain access to such facts (especially if we utilise modern investigative techniques such as stereo microscopy, UV radiation, X-radiography, and plasma-spectrometry - see Caple 2006). So, as a matter of fact, antiques are invariably such that we are able to gain special access to facts about the past time at which they were made, and about how they were constructed. Thus, even though this is not strictly speaking part of what it is to be an antique, as a matter of fact it follows invariably from being an antique that we can gain access to about the past time at which they were made, and about how they were constructed, and so such facts can still ground the distinctive aesthetic experience that antiques give rise to.

[xii] We note in passing that our definition thus bears a resemblance to Historical definitions of what it is to be a work of art, such as the definitions defended by Levinson (1990), Carroll (1993), and Stecker (2005). Whether there is anything to be learnt from this resemblance, and whether making connections between works of art and antiques helps in cashing out precisely what it is for antiques to be rooted in the past, is a good question, but we do not consider it further here.

[xiii] We thank the editors of this journal for raising this interesting objection.

[xiv] It is plausible that cities are not antiques because they do not meet the conditions for being an antique we have already laid down. Cities are constituted by a great number of buildings constructed at different times in their histories, and so in different styles, using different methods of production, rooted in different times. Therefore, considered as a whole, they are not rooted in any particular past time and fail to be antiques for this reason.

[xv] We would like to thank Jon Robson, Stefano Predelli, Harold Noonan, two anonymous referees, and the editors of this journal for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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